

FINAL

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Council Meeting

December 1, 2005

Greenbelt Library, Greenbelt, MD

Attendance:

Members: Alexis Allenback (DLLR), Will Johnson (MDHR), Gary Monroe for Pamela Jenkins-Dobson (MCHR), George Kosovich, Linda Webb (DHCD), Ethelette Ennis, Howard Leonard, Joshua Friedman, Paul Farrell (MSDE), Julie Moyer (MDOT), John Gaver (MDOT) as a guest, Ben Dubin, Vanessa Antrum (DHMH), Lindsay Dunn

Absent: James Tucker (MSD), Diane Edge, Mary Pat Bromwell

Staff: Yvonne Dunkle

Interpreters: Erin Harrison & Debra Radcliffe-Borsch

CART: Sherry Knox

Meeting convened at 3:00 pm

Welcome and Introductions

Ben Dubin, Chair, introduced Secretary Kristen Cox of the Department of Disabilities.

Guest Speaker – Secretary Kristen Cox, Department of Disabilities (MDOD)

Kris Cox presented an overview of her department, its statutory charge to oversee funding and policies that impact people with disabilities and the development of MDOD's 2006 State Disabilities Plan. She emphasized MDOD's present challenges of interfacing the issues that people with disabilities and individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing often face. Ms. Cox explained there are issues that impact both people who are deaf and hard of hearing and people with disabilities and that MDOD often finds themselves in a precarious dance of when and when not to get involved so as not to be perceived as usurping ODHH's authority. MDOD is willing to figure out a relationship that best works for the two agencies to achieve better policy outcomes.

Ideas were shared on how to achieve a dynamic relationship between MDOD and ODHH such as, inviting members of ODHH Advisory Council to MDOD's Commission Board meetings and vice versa. As well as incorporate some of deaf and hard of hearing related issues into MDOD's State Disabilities Plan and work more closely with cabinet secretaries on a one-to-one basis to figure out a solid solution on particular issues that fall under that department's jurisdiction and include ODHH in the process.

Approval of September 8, 2005 minutes:

Three corrections are needed. First comments attributed to Howard Leonard on available funding that MDOD could look at to purchase technology equipment for video relay to be housed in the emergency shelters to access video interpreter remotely should be changed to Ben Dubin. Second, Howard Leonard's comments on sign language classes were not paraphrased correctly. It should read that there are adult basic education classes in three locations around the state. DORS is looking for people who might be interested in becoming instructors in the event

the program expands. And finally, Betsy Leucking's job title should be changed to Program Manager instead of Executive Director.

The minutes, with corrections, were approved by a majority vote.

Chairperson's Report- Ben Dubin

Ben Dubin reported that he has some particular priorities and interests such as education and employment in addition to Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) follow-up and intervention services and its access issues. He would like to address these issues by inviting pertinent individuals who have the expertise in the related fields to come and speak to the Advisory Council. Furthermore, he would like for council members to become ambassadors for the deaf and hard of hearing community to advocate on accessibility issues and not just fulfill their duty by coming to these meetings every three months. He wants to see state agency representatives take a look at their own agency and see whether there are opportunities or needs that need to be addressed for deaf and hard of hearing people. He stated that we all need to do a job and there is a lot to be done in our community. We also need to instill in deaf and hard of hearing people to become their own advocates.

Director's Report- Yvonne Dunkle

Yvonne Dunkle asked the members for their feedback on ODHH's new brochures, display board, and promotional items. Some members commented about the language used in the material and that it may not reach a wider population. John Gaver volunteered to use MDOT resources if ODHH needs any material published in alternative formats such as Braille or Spanish. It was also recommended ODHH's new website need to be compatible with standards set out in Section 508.

Yvonne Dunkle commended MSDE for following through on the failed legislation, American Sign Language (ASL) for Credit during last year's legislative session. MSDE has established a study committee to review the feasibility of having ASL recognized for credit in K-12 settings. Even though, Yvonne Dunkle was thrilled to learn that MSDE is responsive to the needs and is supportive of this effort she also expressed concern that there is no deaf representation on the committee. The committee is currently comprised of university level professionals in the field of Deaf Studies and Interpreter Training. Yvonne Dunkle asked Paul Farrell, MSDE's representative, to bring this issue of concern to his agency.

A policy question was raised about ODHH giving \$500 to Metro Maryland Kids of Deaf Adults (MMKODA) for its holiday party and the appropriateness of state funds being given to organizations. The member asked if ODHH had the authority to grant monies out of its operating budget and if so, what are the guidelines to govern this practice? It was mentioned that there are many organizations and non-profits that would welcome donations from ODHH. How would ODHH decide who is deserving and who is not? Another member said that if we grant funds it should be restricted to Maryland-based organizations.

Yvonne responded to these concerns by relaying that Rob Platky, Director of Finance Department and that the limit is \$500, approves each transaction in advance. This type of

transaction is made at the Director's discretion with purposeful consideration to the benefit realized on behalf of ODHH in exchange for those funds.

Members' Report and Update

A. Driver's Education - Julie Moyer, MDOT

John Gaver reported that there would be a meeting between the Governor's Deputy Chief of Staff Craig Williams, MDOT/MVA and ODHH tomorrow on 12/2/05 to discuss the issue of driver's education for deaf and hard of hearing at the Governor's Conference Room at the State House. Ben Dubin, Howard Leonard and Yvonne Dunkle will represent ODHH.

The MDOT had a Secretary's Conference on ADA and Disability Issues in November, which Yvonne Dunkle attended. John Gaver stated that he would have liked to see more members from the council in attendance.

B. State Agency on Deaf & Hard of Hearing Issues – Each state representative gave a brief synopsis of their agency's programs and services and issues they have addressed or are facing. (Agency reports attached.)

C. Legislative Bills for upcoming legislation session

John Gaver (MDOT) announced that there is an executive order establishing a Human Services Transportation Coordinating Committee. When that Executive Board was established, it, at that time, identified the Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities (now MDOD) as having a designated representative on its committee. John Gaver is pushing to have that executive order revised by changing the name of Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities to Department of Disabilities. Since he was asking for revisions, Mr. Gaver offered the members to add ODHH to that Committee if they thought it would be advantageous. The Committee's role is to look at cross agency sharing of funds on transportation issues. If the Advisory Council thinks it is important to have a representative from ODHH on that Committee, he will put that into the provision. It was suggested that the language should be structured so that ODHH or a representative be added to the provision in the executive order. If the Council supports it, then a letter should be written now to the transit administrator then it would be passed to Secretary Flanagan. The Council encouraged John Gaver to proceed in adding ODHH along with MDOD to the committee.

Old Business:

A. Creation of new sub-committees or focus groups for specific issues

Howard Leonard submitted to the council a memo dated December 1, 2005 (attached) entitled "Addressing the needs of deaf individuals who fall in the category of "traditionally underserved" or low functioning" and asked the council to consider the merits of his earlier agency report and this memo.

B. Captioned Movies

Joshua Friedman reported that not much has been done on the captioning front. He has prepared a draft letter to be sent to the Governor, which he shared with the members of the advisory council for input. The letter is requesting the Governor and any other pertinent agency like

Maryland's Department of Justice look into this matter and compare it to successes made in other states.

Ben Dubin added a bit of background information on captioning movies and how ADA is applied. Most captioned movies are shown during the weekday which conflicts with deaf and hard of hearing individuals work schedule.

New Business:

A. Member Role on the Advisory Council

Ben Dubin emphasized that he had already touched on this subject in his report that council members should liken themselves to ambassadors for the deaf and hard of hearing communities and that once we leave our quarterly meeting we should be more aware of what is happening in our own state agencies.

B. Change the Format of Meetings

Ben Dubin presented an idea to change the format of the meetings to better reflect member's issues and/or concerns. If any member has a particular issues that they feel should be discussed please send Ben Dubin an email for it to be added to the agenda.

C. Future Meeting Dates

The next meeting will be on Thursday, March 23rd at 3 pm in the Baltimore area.

Open Forum

Time ran out for the public to address issues to the council members. Brenda Kelly-Frey quickly brought up an issue regarding emergency preparedness that many people mistakenly believe the government is going to take care of them in the event of an emergency. People need to understand that the government is there to assist but they will be doing other things during an emergency. People need to prepare themselves such as taking some time to search the web, find out what they need for their families to stay in their homes as a shelter or to evacuate, participate in drills offered in different counties and jurisdictions. Mock preparedness drills are always looking for people with disabilities to participate. That is how the county governments can better prepare to handle people with disabilities' emergency situation. Now, deaf people need to advocate for themselves in preparation for emergencies.

Announcements:

None

The meeting was adjourned at 6 pm.